

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-16

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APPROVED BY NEA/P:JEBRIGGS

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H - MISS FOLGER (INFO)

EUR/P - MR. SAVAGE

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R 131914Z MAY 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USINT DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING IS PARTIAL
EXCERPT FROM DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PRESS BRIEFING MAY 13,
1974:

QUOTE: Q. THERE WAS A REPORT TO THE EFFECT THAT THE
UNITED STATES HAD SAID THAT THE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY
THE TINY JEWISH COMMUNITY IN SYRIA WERE UNFORTUNATE, OR WAS
AN INTERNAL SYRIAN MATTER, AND LET IT GO AT THAT. BUT
NOW IT SEEMS THAT THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE OF VIEW ON THIS
BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. CAN YOU TELL US SOMETHING
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ABOUT THAT?

A. YES. THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW QUESTIONS ON THIS MATTER -- PARTICULARLY IN THE USE OF THE PHRASE "INTERNAL" -- THAT THIS IS AN INTERNAL SYRIAN MATTER. IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THIS UNFORTUNATE PHRASE, WHICH APPEARED IN A LETTER WE USED FOR A SHORT TIME IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON THIS ISSUE IS NOT DEPARTMENT POLICY. RATHER OUR VIEW, WHICH IS REFLECTED IN CURRENT LETTERS REPLYING TO QUERIES ON THIS SUBJECT, IS THAT WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE FATE OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN SYRIA- WE HAVE MADE REPEATED AND VIGOROUS EFFORTS AT HIGH LEVELS TO HELP THESE PEOPLE. WE BELIEVE OUR APPROACH THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION, AND IT IS OUR FIRM BELIEF THAT A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE CURRENT MIDDLE EAST CRISIS OFFERS THE SYRIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY THE BEST OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD THE KIND OF LIFE, FREE FROM RESTRICTIONS AND INTIMIDATIONS, TO WHICH THE UNITED STATES BELIEVES EVERYONE IS ENTITLED.

Q. WHEN DID THIS UNFORTUNATE PHRASE APPEAR IN TERMS OF DATES, WHEN THE STATE DEPARTMENT WAS DISTRIBUTING THIS LETTER?

A. I WILL TAKE THAT QUESTION, BECAUSE I WANT TO BE CERTAIN.

A. AND HAS THE DEPARTMENT DISTRIBUTED THE NEW POLICY -- THE LETTER DEALING WITH THE NEW POLICY, OR THE CORRECTED POLICY, SHOULD WE SAY, OR THE CORRECTED LETTER -- HAS THAT BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO THOSE WHO RECEIVED THE ORIGINAL LETTER WITH THE "INTERNAL MATTER" PHRASEOLOGY?

A. I WILL CHECK THAT.

Q. ARE WE SAYING NOW THAT IT IS NO LONGER AN INTERNAL SYRIAN MATTER?

A. I SAID THAT THIS UNFORTUNATE PHRASE IS NOT DEPARTMENT POLICY, AND THE FACT IS THAT WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN SYRIA.

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Q. WE ARE CONCERNED. BUT WAS THE ORIGINAL PHRASE THAT THIS WAS AN INTERNAL MATTER OF NO CONCERN TO THIS COUNTRY, OR WAS IT JUST THOSE TWO WORDS, "INTERNAL MATTER", THAT WERE OBJECTIONABLE?

A. I UNDERSTAND THAT THE OBJECTIONABLE PART OF THE LETTER WAS THAT THIS WAS AN INTERNAL SYRIAN MATTER.

Q. AND SPECIFICALLY, WAS IT A RESULT OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE PREVIOUS PHRASEOLOGY, OR DID SOMEBODY JUST HAPPEN TO NOTICE THIS PHRASE AND DECIDE IT WAS UNFORTUNATE?

A. FOR YOUR BACKGROUND, IT CAME UP IN ISRAEL, I BELIEVE IN THE PARLIAMENT THERE.

I SHOULD MAKE IT CLEAR, ALSO, THAT WITH RESPECT TO THIS LETTER -- AND I BELIEVE BOB ANDERSON HAS MADE IT CLEAR SOMEPLACE ALONG THE LINE, WHEREVER THEY ARE, THAT THE SECRETARY WAS NOT AWARE OF THIS LETTER AND DID NOT SIGN THE LETTER. I THINK THAT SHOULD BE MADE CLEAR.

Q. I DON'T WANT TO SPLIT HAIRS, BUT IT STILL REMAINS AN INTERNAL SYRIAN MATTER, BUT WE ARE CONCERNED. IS THIS WHAT YOU ARE SAYING? YOU CAN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT IT IS AN INTERNAL SYRIAN MATTER.

A. YES. BUT I THINK THE IMPLICATION IS WHAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT.

Q. WHO WAS THE LETTER ADDRESSED TO?

A. THESE WERE IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC QUERIES.

Q. FROM THE BUREAU OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS?

A. I BELIEVE THAT IS THE CASE.

Q. SOME FIFTY CONGRESSMEN, AT LEAST THIRTY-TWO IN ONE GROUP ASKED THE SECRETARY TO TAKE THIS MATTER UP WITH THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT WHILE HE IS IN THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATING ON THE DISENGAGEMENT. HAS HE IN FACT DISCUSSED THIS WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ANY OFFICIAL OF THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT?

A. I SIMPLY HAVE NOT BEEN IN A POSITION AT ANY POINT IN THE LAST COUPLE OF WEEKS TO BE ABLE TO COMMENT ON THE SECRETARY'S DISCUSSIONS. I HAVE LEFT THAT TO THE PARTY. END QUOTE.

DECLASSIFY UPON RECEIPT. RUSH

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